

BLIND LAWYER, AIDED BY HIS INDOMITABLE WILL AND DEVOTION OF HIS WIFE, MAY GO TO U. S. SENATE

Henry Ridgely, Leader of the Delaware Bar and Probable Democratic Nominee for the Senatorial Toga, Seeks Opportunity for Public Service

"THE WORLD NEEDS MEN OF VISION—UNSELFISH SPOKESMEN," HE DECLARES

Unflagging Loyalty of Helpmate Supports Him in His Interest in Farming, Literature, Athletics and Solution of Pressing Problems of the Day

NOT all of the world's fighting men are in uniform. And there are wars and campaigns and battles on this earth where the blaring trumpet does not sound, nor cannon thunder.

There are men and women who win battles that are as long as life against tremendous odds of physical handicap; who, in a sense, ignore these odds; who, with their own superhuman effort and the constant help and comradeship of a silent partner, force the enemy to play the role of friend.

Of such a group of intrepid fighters is Henry Ridgely, of Dover, blind, and yet a leading lawyer of the State of Delaware, successful farmer of 400 acres of apple, peach and grape, and heralded Democratic nominee for the United States Senate.

Of such is Mrs. Henry Ridgely, his wife, who with eyes that help to see for him, with a will that fights beside his, four-square to all obstacles, is as dauntless and victorious for him as he could be for himself. Their interest is one, their battle is one, their victory is one victory.

Mr. Ridgely is president of the corporation of the Farmers' Bank, of Dover, which is the depository for the State and county moneys; he is a trustee of the University of Delaware and chairman of the Committee on Instruction which chooses the faculty. And he is the author of the only complete digest of the State of Delaware's judicial reports.

"And," says Mrs. Ridgely with pardonable pride, "you may discount it because I am his wife, but I believe he is the greatest lawyer in the State—if not in the country."

With all his activity, which constantly throws him into the arena of public life, Mr. Ridgely has so subordinated his blindness to his intense determination to meet all men on equal terms, to receive no deference because of his physical handicap, that it is said, one half of the men and women who meet him never realize that he is blind.

Indeed, it might be said that Henry Ridgely is not blind. He walks the streets of his native town, Dover, unassisted. He faces the bench or a jury in the open courtroom with unflagging energy and intelligence. He prepares his cases and makes his depositions with little more assistance than any attorney requires. He directs the business of an immense and paying farm. He reads, swims and dances.

In the memory of one of his fellow attorneys, who has known Henry Ridgely for the last fifteen years, only four times during their long acquaintance has Mr. Ridgely mentioned his blindness.

Henry Ridgely, with affectionate assistance from his wife, refuses to remember that he is blind; he fixes his clients with eyes that are strikingly clear and ardent, so that they, if they know, forget his infirmity; he meets legal opponents on the same terms and usually wins—so that, to all intents and purposes, the blind man is not blind.

"We can't see very well, Henry and I," is the quaint way his cousin, Henry R. Johnson, also a lawyer of Dover, and blind, puts it.

And one is forced to accept Mr. Ridgely on those terms. At the very most, he "can't see very well."

He was found bathing with his wife in the breakers at Rehoboth, Del., his summer home, the other day. The attractive frame cottage overlooks the ocean from a low bluff. From the porch the head and shoulders of Mr. Ridgely could be seen meeting the heaving rollers. Mrs. Ridgely played about in the surf closer to shore.

After some moments the couple—who radiate a particularly charming sense of comradeship—left the water. And Mrs. Ridgely, after wringing some of the sea water from her bathing frock, cupped her hands over her mouth and called: "Ho, Mac! Come!"

A great collic bounded into view and up to them from a declivity down the beach.

Hand in hand, the lawyer and his wife approached their home, and within a few moments they appeared on their latticed porch. Two brilliantly yellow canaries, freed of their cage for the morning, circled about, chirping and stopping now



Mrs. Ridgely reading to her husband on the porch of their Rehoboth cottage

Yes, in Jones Creek, right by the farm, there are all sorts of opportunities for rowing. I call it creek, though there is still a difference of opinion. You know," she smiled, "the Almighty made it a creek, but the Government made it a river."

"I am in my office at 9 o'clock. My main work is the preparation of cases

up. That's not a good habit. And I don't recommend it. But it happens that a good deal of work in law is thinking—the mind happens to be the only implement of chief importance in the business.

The house at Dover, Del., which the Ridgely family has occupied since 1760



The cottage on the beach at Rehoboth, where Mr. Ridgely indulges his fondness for surf bathing



Mr. and Mrs. Ridgely on the steps of their seaside cottage

and the giving of opinions. And, of course, my office work includes the duties in regard to the bank. I leave the office at 5, and on perhaps go to my farm. In the evening I read."

Mr. Ridgely's home is the old Ridgely house, on the northeast corner of the Green, in Dover. Adjoining the home and communicating with it is his office. His is the oldest house in the community and the only one which has preserved its original form. It was built in 1728, and has been occupied by Ridgelys since about 1760.

It is a charming example of Colonial architecture. It is of brick, with characteristic white trimmings. The beautiful feature of the walls is enhanced by clinging green ivy. The interior is rich—the library one of the most attractive, and undoubtedly the most complete south of Wilmington.

Leading almost directly from the library is the hallway, and the door to Mr. Ridgely's office, where, with the assistance of George M. Fisher, an attorney, and a stenographer, he conducts his large practice. In one corner stands the typewriter he himself uses for his personal letters. In another corner of the back room of the quaint little low-ceilinged office are two large filing cases. Each is about four feet high, with a width and a depth of a foot and a half and three feet, respectively.

In one of these cabinets are packed—and they are packed so tight it is a difficult matter to insert one's finger between the sheets of record paper—the cases at law concluded during Mr. Ridgely's career to date and, in the majority of instances, won. In the other are packed equally tightly the cases pending or to be worked upon. Each cabinet is full from top to bottom. They, perhaps more than anything else that might be said, measure Mr. Ridgely's industry and his success.

Home a Paradise of Comfort and Taste

The back of his home leads into a long garden of unusual taste. The dining room gives out on a porch where Mr. and Mrs. Ridgely are accustomed to breakfast in the warm weather. An ancient box-wood tree shadows the table.

A pathway, under great trees, and flanked by beautiful shrubbery and flowers, points straight as an arrow to a chattering little fountain-pool. Goldfish swim about lazily among the lilies. To the left of the pool is a tea-house, screened and embowered in foliage. In the cool of the evening Mr. and Mrs. Ridgely sit here to watch the everlasting stars.

When the moon is high, this garden is a garden of fairy, rich in shadows and soft moon-silver. The atmosphere of the entire house and, indeed, of the Green in front of it, where rise ancient trees and the beauty of colonial houses, whispers of quiet, ghostly, privileged gentlemen and the soft loveliness of brocade and lace, out of a Revolution, past, rich in dreams.

"I am partial to intellectual prob-

lems," said Mr. Ridgely, "and that is why I like farming. There are so many problems to solve in farming. My farm yields a large crop of fruit. I have on my hands now 20,000 bushels of early peaches; and soon there'll be early apples and grapes. The most insistent problem is proper distribution, by clinging green ivy. Much of it is experimental. There is need for a great deal of research and reading, which we might dignify with the name of 'study.' The problems are scientific—the treatment of trees, the treatment of the soil, are matters that point directly to the realm of science."

Much of Mr. Ridgely's reading is done in company with his wife, although he understands the various systems of reading for the blind. The walls of other rooms besides the library in his Dover home are lined with large tomes in Braille.

"I studied Braille and the New York pointer system just as Henry did," said Henry R. Johnson in his home just across the Green, "but I couldn't make much of it." He did. He knows all the systems.

A hasty glance at Braille copies of "Endymion," the Odes of Horace, the Apocrypha, the Bible. Most of these books are obtained from English publishers, and the four mentioned only suggest the type and variety of the volumes Mr. Ridgely uses.

A larger part of his reading is done by his wife. They read novels together, as well as books on economics, political philosophy, psychology and law.

Recently, said Mr. Ridgely, "I have read a William James' lectures on 'Tragicisms,' the Socratic dialogues, Saltmarsh's book on literary criticism, and he named a long list of classics as well as recent issues." "And I like a good detective story."

"He read a book the other day, a biography," said Mrs. Ridgely. "It was as thrilling as a movie scenario."

"In the courtroom he is denied the usual fittings made by attorneys. But he holds the case clearly before him as though he were reading it out of a digest. There is a question that he is the foremost lawyer in the State.

"And he is eloquent. He lines up his points one by one with amazing force and insurmountable conviction. He is a legal opponent that any man can tremble to meet without being courage."

Loves Poetry and Enjoys Free Verse—in a Measure

But not all the books Mr. Ridgely and his wife read are books that we need to remember. For instance he enjoys poetry. "Perhaps I shouldn't confess that—sometimes folk object to a man enjoying verse," he smiled one of his frequent smiles. "But I do enjoy verse."

"And he enjoys free verse, too—Amy Lowell. She's written some beautiful things, don't you think?" added Mrs. Ridgely. "But he is not a complete convert to free verse."

Mr. Ridgely buys all the latest books on international and national affairs, also publications such as the Manchester Guardian. It is his desire to keep abreast of the times, and he apparently succeeds, with the help of Mrs. Ridgely.

Concerning his probable selection as

will not simply remain cogs in the great machine of an organization, but will attack problems disinterestedly, and with only one desire, and that to solve them, for the good of the greatest number."

Disinterested in Money; Turns Mind to Problems

"He is not out after the money; he is interested in the legal problem, which to the best of his ability he tries to disentangle for the good of the neighborhood," the inhabitants of Dover will tell you.

And they will add that therein he is much like his blind father before him, who would never try a case unless he was first convinced of the innocence of his client. And if his client was not innocent he refused to take the case.

The collic dog, which had been romping a half hour before, came back with the two fathers, walked quietly out on the porch and then snuggled up against the chair in which Mr. Ridgely sat. "The dog's name?" Mr. Ridgely repeated. "Oh, that's a kind of joke."

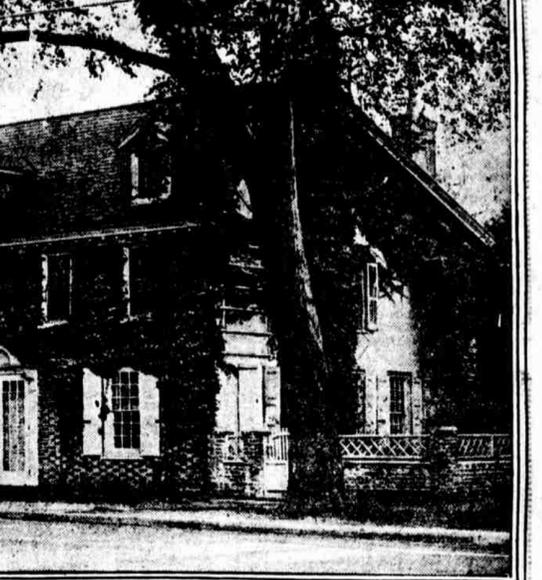
of our tools." It is the way the venerable Henry R. Johnson phrases it, "perfect the tools we have left for our work. We've developed our memory, our minds—so that thinking has become clearer and more incisive."

On the Green Mr. Ridgely is still numbered among the "young, active" men. But Mr. Johnson, gray-headed figure, walking along the shaded path of the Green, has become a mentor.

"The young lawyers, when they stumble on a stickler in law and can't make anything of it," said the old man's colleague, "go to see Mr. Johnson."

If Mr. Ridgely wins the Democratic nomination for the United States Senate, and is elected, he will be the second blind man to take part in the deliberations of the Nation at Washington. The other is Senator Thomas Pryor Gore, of Oklahoma.

Their lives are in many respects similar. Neither was born blind, though Senator Gore became blind at a much earlier age than Mr. Ridgely. At ten he was blinded through an accident while at play. Senator Gore also cultivated a passion for reading, as a youth, and his memory developed as remarkably as Mr. Ridgely's. He was inter-



And his grave face lighted up by Rob Roy MacGregor. "His full name is Rob Roy MacGregor," he remarked. "I am not a politician. If the people nominate me, then, of course, I will fight for the election. I'll campaign to the best of my ability. It's a trite thing to be saying, but I do not seek any nomination at all. I am intensely interested in present-day problems—they are perhaps not new problems, but the same old problems dressed in new clothes."

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The rear of the Ridgely home in Dover, taken from the old-fashioned garden